



# Wayne County Community College District

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### **CHANCELLOR'S SPRING 2022 MESSAGE TO THE WCCCD FAMILY**

I greet you at the beginning of 2022 and the opening of the Spring semester in a spirit of optimism and gratitude. I am grateful that we are working together with patience and resilience under stressful circumstances to assure the continuity of our programs, services, and functions to the benefit of the students, businesses, and communities that we serve. The Spring 2022 semester will kick off with the virtual faculty convocation on Saturday, January 15. Convocation activities are planned from 8:30 a.m. to noon with discipline meetings to follow. This faculty convocation provides an opportunity to focus on those teaching and learning topics of the most importance to faculty members. We will also use this event to involve the members of the faculty and staff in the update of WCCCD's strategic plan discussed below. The Division of Educational Affairs will communicate with faculty members regarding plans for the convocation and the beginning of the Spring semester. As well, the Division of Student Services will provide students with information related to the beginning of the semester. Classes for the Spring semester will begin Tuesday, January 18, 2022.

As we struggle with the impact of the rapidly spreading omicron variant of the coronavirus, we will continue to place the highest priority on the health, safety, and wellbeing of our students and employees. We must also recognize the emergence of the "great resignation" in our nation as families and individuals consider work/life balance issues in the wake of the omicron surge and consider the impact that this phenomenon is having on the personal and professional choices of our faculty and staff. I am mindful that all of us are in a different place now than we were nearly two years ago at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unlike the intense fear and uncertainty we felt during those early months, we are now struggling with the emotional "long haul" of the pandemic. As the pandemic drags on and new variants emerge, we may feel emotionally exhausted or drained. I am proud of the members of the WCCCD family—students, faculty, staff, and community supporters—for being so understanding and empathetic toward one another under these anxiety-producing circumstances.

WCCCD's MIPSE and the Division of Human Resources COVID-19 Task Force continue to provide COVID-19 pandemic health and safety response at all WCCCD locations. This includes an Employee Work Site & Exposure Control Plan that meets all governmental agencies requirements. The District will continue to provide personal protection equipment for its employees and students. Building locations will be regularly cleaned and disinfected. Hand sanitizer and cleaning supply stations are available for everyone to use. The task force will continue with contact tracing of all inquiries from the District Coronavirus Reporting Hotline. Assessments will be conducted with each person and those impacted will be properly notified. As the new OSHA vaccine, testing and mask requirements begin, the District will be collecting and monitoring all vaccine and weekly testing records.

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I love this Kitty O'Meara's quote inspired by the pandemic: *"And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses and made new choices, dreamed new images, and created new ways."* One of the important initiatives of 2022 will be the update of WCCCD's strategic plan. The theme of the 2022-2026 strategic plan is "New Day, New Way" with a focus on student success. The WCCCD is entering a new day based on the lessons we are learning from our ongoing COVID-19 pandemic experiences. Now, as we anticipate the next phase of WCCCD's long-term transformation, we are called upon to "make new choices, dream new images, and create new ways." We fully recognize that we can never go back to "the way things were" before COVID-19; we are truly entering a "new day." This period of new beginnings will be the fourth phase (Pathways IV) of Pathways to the Future, WCCCD's multiyear initiative for institutional transformation that began in 2002.

To build the future of WCCCD that those we serve so richly deserve, we will discover "new ways" to deliver instructional programs and student support services. One of the lessons we are learning during COVID-19 is that we must anticipate and adapt more quickly and effectively to rapidly changing demographic, educational, economic, and cultural changes in Detroit and the Wayne County region. Based on this insight, the strategic plan update will prompt us to be more innovative and entrepreneurial at all levels. For example, the pandemic spotlighted the need for innovation in response to the urgent basic insecurities of students in areas such as finances, food, transportation, childcare, medical care, and mental health. As well, it became clear that many students lacked the computer and Internet access needed for online and other virtual learning modalities.

It is my expectation that every reinvention effort during Pathways IV and the period of the five-year period of the strategic plan update will be developed through an equity-driven lens with the goal of removing all personal, academic, and societal barriers so that every student has the opportunities and resources needed to thrive and succeed. For example, equity-minded teaching means that we must serve the students that we actually have, not the students we may wish to have. Our students come to us with vastly different experiences tied to their cultural identities. Culturally responsive teaching, according to Darlene Miller ([Community College Journal](#), December 2021/January 2022), focuses on the assets students bring to the classroom rather than what students cannot do. All members of the WCCCD family are called upon to focus on the strengths and positive attributes of all our students, including racially marginalized learners, using asset-based references rather than deficit-based language such as "at-risk students." Working together, we can close existing equity and opportunity gaps and shape a future of WCCCD in which students from all racial, ethnic, gender, national, educational, and experiential backgrounds and identities will thrive and succeed.